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ABSTRACT

Although summer camps can provide opportunities for personal growth, self-worth, and education for living, camp programming changes are necessary because today's youth have had experiences which reduce the novelty of camping. Summer camps can be used to provide the missing rite of passage from youth to adulthood and to create real contexts and direct experiences which are transferable and which are missing due to the lack of extended families and to vicarious television viewing. In particular, summer camps provide an ideal atmosphere in which today's youth can develop a Samaritan ethic and can develop into good citizens. To do so, camps must have deliberate programming, provide relevant activities, allow practice of daily living skills, and maximize the environment, all of which elements are present in the National Leadership Conference. The 10-day, 4-phase program strives to develop social activists and caring vigilant citizens with "ignition experiences," day-long seminars, free choice activities, and "synthesis" activities designed to provide unity of purpose. Staff members constantly reinforce tenacity, excellence, and relevance to daily living. The National Leadership Conference model has become a prescription for other residential camp programs and could be the basis of a revival in North American summer camping. (SB)

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THE SAMARITAN ETHIC AND RESIDENTIAL CAMPING

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Memories of Summer Camp include toasting marshmallows over an open fire, canoe trips, mosquitoes and blackfly, make-believe Indian rituals, midnight snacks and camp songs. Today's Summer Camps still include these experiences whose rationale is based more on folklore and tradition than educational need ('Education' is here used in its broadest sense).

The purpose of this paper is to explore rationales and philosophies for Summer Camps appropriate for the 1980's. The intention is not to dispell the value of tradition in camps or to suggest the removal of those elements which make the experience unique and enjoyable. Summer Camps can provide opportunities for personal growth, self-worth and an education for living. Indeed the literature supports the positive carry-over value of a camping experience, although rarely are there deliberate plans for transfer of experience. Traditionally, transfer has been haphazard (Wilkinson, 1983) and the central goal recreation.

A rationale for Summer Camps

Summer Camps can provide a unique educational setting. Young people live with each other and significant adults for extended periods of time. Often, there is a broad age range within the leadership which is usually lacking in such agencies as school and family. However, schools and family, during the past twenty years, have provided many children with experiences of outdoor activities such as camping and boating. When young people arrive at Summer Camp today they may have had experiences which reduce the novelty of many traditional camp programs.

Some Summer Camp organizers have responsed by offering tennis camps, music camps and more recently, computer camps. The success of these programs supports the notion that change is necessary in Summer Camp programming.

Our culture does not provide a formal rite of passage from youth to adulthood for young people (Gibbons, 1974). This transition from youth to adulthood is often very brief and is not catered for in the high school curriculum (Coleman, et al., 1974). Traditionally, socialization to the new role is left to chance. However, socialization was often successful because there were many opportunities outside of school for young people to engage in experiences which gave them a sense of power and self worth (Keilsmeier, 1982). Youth of eighty years ago were able to experience life with adults by accompanying father to work or mother around the home. Also these youth were in the work place with adults at the age when today's youth are in high school. These experiences were sometimes strenuous but permitted a gradual transition from youth to adulthood. Summer Camp programs could provide this presently missing link.

The 1980's provide an atmosphere of continual and rapid change. This increased pace of life does not permit opportunities for experimentation and consolidation of values and beliefs. Direct experiences are increasingly being replaced by vicarious experiences; and although computers and television have permitted the generation and assimilation of increased quantities of information, they have also contributed to our society becoming experience poor (Coleman, 1978). The printing press, the television and, more recently, the computer, are not simply machines which convey information. They have become metaphors through which young people conceptualize reality (Postman, 1979). Someone must take the responsibility for creating real contexts which are transferable, as Dewey (1938) would contend, educators should help make connections. Summer Camp staff, in the role of educators, could perform this function.

There has been a shift from the extended family to the nuclear family and now toward the single parent family (Toffler, 1980). It is predicted that of all children born today in North America, forty-five percent will have single parents by the age of eighteen (Wilkinson, 1983). Whereas this change of family structure provides different living conditions, it also deprives children of some rich experiences which could form the backdrop for critical decisions in later life. James Coleman (1979) cites the example of a child who has grown up seeing a grandparent grow old and die. This child will have a rich fabric of meaning to such words as "old age" and "death" which would be unknown to the children without such an experience. When the child grows up and is in a position to make political decisions about the elderly, the fabric of meaning provided by the childhood experiences provides a context for action that may be otherwise missing.

Opportunity for direct experience is also being affected by the increase in the number of hours devoted to viewing television. An average North American child watches 15,000 hours of television between the age of five and eighteen compared with spending 11,500 hours attending school (Postman, 1979). The only other activity which occupies more time is sleeping. As previously mentioned, the vicarious nature of the experience offered by television, and the pre-occupation of schools in the acquisition of knowledge, is not a basis for experiential learning. Summer Camp may be one of the few remaining places where direct experiences are legitimate activities.

Criticism of the education system for not addressing the needs of young people or noting that the rapid rate of change in our society is the cause of many problems with youth, is not unique. During the 1930's Kurt Hahn created a school whose curriculum was designed to address "six declines" in youth

which he considered to be a social disease of the time (Richards, 1981). These were: the decline of fitness due to modern methods of locomotion; the decline of initiative and enterprise due to the widespread disease of spectatoritis; decline of memory and imagination due to the confused restlessness of modern life; decline of skill and care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship; decline of self discipline due to the ever present availability of stimulants and tranquilizers; and the decline of compassion due to the unseemly haste with which modern life is conducted (Hahn, 1938). Apart from idiomatic idiosyncracies there are similarities in the criticisms levelled at youth and society today.

The Samaritan Ethic

Each of the declines mentioned could be the topic of a paper. However, the rest of this paper will address one because it has many ramifications for young people moving into the mainstream of society in the 1980's. This is the decline in compassion. Compassion is a quality which results in service to family, friends, and community through activities such as caring, sharing and commitment to helping the community.

The story of the Samaritan is one which is often used to illustrate a caring, sharing and compassionate act. So important is the need to restore such an attitude in the youth of the 1980's that the term Samaritan Ethic has been used to describe the attitude which young people need to develop.

Traditionally, the development of compassion and the Samaritan Ethic was left to strong, highly visible role models. The 1970's have been referred to as the "me decade"; a period when self centeredness and lack of caring for others became prevalent. There has also been an increase in the expectation that compassionate acts and service require material reward.

Young people still rate "meaningful work" as the first criterion for a good job (Yankelovitch, 1974). However, many jobs do not provide "meaningful work", and increasingly more youth will be unemployed in the 1980's. This does not mean young poeple will lack this desire. On the contrary, they may, in their search for meaningful activity, serve their community.

The question which remains is how this whole process can be facilitated when schools have reneged on their responsibility to provide direct experiences at the expense of acquisition of knowledge; family life has become so decentralized that there is insufficient role modelling; and the perception of the real world is gained through that portrayed by television producers whose program decisions are based on profit rather than educational concerns. One answer would be to revert to a lifestyle which was common at the turn of the century; however, this is neither practical nor desirable. Another answer is a place where young people can spend extended periods of time, together, experiment with decisions and their concommitant consequences, be exposed to significant adult role models, and develop a Samaritan Ethic.

A Compelling Demonstration

The Summer Camp provides an ideal setting but the programming must become more deliberate in determining the desirable outcomes. Primarily, activities must have direct relevence to the real world 'back home.' The living skills needed in the micro-community of camp provide a metaphor for decisions which must be made when living in the future adult world. Staff in these summer camps must become facilitators who can help the young campers to make the necessary connections. Most camps are situated in settings where water activities, tenting, out-tripping, camp fires, etc. become obvious themes for the program. It is necessary to maximize the environment and still take advantage of all those

things which make Summer Camps special places. The following description explains in some detail how a program which is designed to produce active vigilant citizens can be operated in the physical setting of a summer camp.

The National Leadership Conference is a program which was created by the inspirational leadership of James Kielsmeier.

> "It employs experiential challenge activities shared by many programs but departs sharply in the outcomes it seeks for participants. Most importantly, it strives to make clear connections between vigorous experiential activities and how what is learned from them may be applied (Kielsmeier, 1982)."

Whereas the central theme is leadership, it is leadership for the purpose of developing active vigilant citizens--a phrase coined by the late Kurt Hahn. The model of leadership stressed is that of Robert Greenleaf (1970) who holds that an effective leader is always a servant first.

The goals of this program are simple, yet are seldom articulated in any other camping program.

- To raise consciousness levels and a sense of efficacy about environmental issues, the future and nature of leadership, especially the concept of the servant leader.
- To stimulate higher levels of understanding and to empower participants to act on their environment.
- To work cooperatively with people of a different city, school, race, and socioeconomic group.
- To identify and/or clarify a personal sense of direction for the future.
- To identify and make decisions regarding specific areas where personal growth are needed.
- To develop a stronger sense of self.

These goals have variously been reported as outcomes of many traditional Summer Camps. However, they most often have been a result of chance experiences. This program deliberately plans for these outcomes; they are achieved through the conventional adventure and recreation activities common in Summer Camps. In all these activities the Samaritan Ethic is promoted; often through caring for the environment or sharing with friends.

The camp opens with an intense ignition experience where students are exposed to the unique physical environment with a series of experiential activities involving running, swimming, acclimatization and adventure challenges. They are simultaneously exposed to a unique social environment by forming groups of ten to fourteen individuals. Groups are comprised of representatives of a variety of cities, schools, races and socioeconomic backgrounds. The effect of this ignition experience is to divide the camp population into cohesive groups ready to participate in the remainder of the program.

The next phase includes a series of day long seminars with themes such as Self and Leadership, Moral and Ethical Dimensions of Leadership, Creativity and Communication in Leadership, and Leadership for Spaceship Earth. The activity content of the seminars include high ropes course, canoeing, games, arts and crafts, dance, drama, appropriate technology, etc. The key to the seminar is the skilled resource staff who are able to tease out significant events which have direct relevance to life back home. For example, one of the seminars unequally divides the food for the participants. There is an opportunity to share. Sharing may be based on equality or equity. These experiences are then extrapolated into the real world and the debriefing based on the unequal distribution of food around the world. Indeed, it may be revealed that there is an unequal distribution of resources in their own cities.

Moreover, this could stimulate students to take an active role in addressing this issue when they return home. Each of these seminars is completed by the participants while in their primary groups. The processing is continued in their sleeping quarters which are allocated according to primary groups.

As the program progresses there is opportunity for a choice of activities. These include a wide range so that ideally each student can try a skill they have not previously experienced. These activities occur first in two hour blocks and include sailing, canoeing, massage, creative writing, brainstorming, dance and lifesaving. Later in the program, the free choice activity is offered for a 24 hour period. This "Pursuit of Excellence" permits the student to participate indepth for an extended period of time, and provides an opportunity to achieve a high level of performance within the constraints of 24 hours. There is also encouragement for tenacity of pursuit.

Many of these "Pursuit of Excellent" sessions involve leaving the camp and operating in the local community. It is here that the participants are expected to experiment with the Samaritan Ethic through face to face interaction with people and the provision of a community service. Although these sessions are of short duration, they do heighten an awarenss, are real, and resource staff help make the necessary connections to life back home.

The final phase of the program is the "Synthesis". It is during this time when many of the transition strategies are identified. Part of this is conducted with the original homogeneous groups from each school or city. Plans are made for community service projects to be initiated when the participants return home. It is here that the privilege of attending the camp becomes a responsibility. Part of synthesizing involves whole group activities designed to provide a unity of purpose. One of these is the marathon; a 5-6

mile run where the entire camp, campers, resource staff and service crew participate. Another is the final banquet where many people cook, decorate, or provide entertainment; it is truly a celebration with a festive mood. The last night is a powerful ceremonial closure. Each camper has the opportunity for solo reflection, and then a sharing around the campfire of lessons learned and emotions felt. Unfailingly, this ceremony provides a powerful closure to the ten day program and marks the beginning of the grander goal of sending empowered young people back into their cities ready to serve.

This very brief description of the National Leadership Conference illustrates the potential for use of residential camps as a place where social activists, vigilant citizens and caring persons may be developed. The activity content of the program is not threatening to traditional camp owners because it is still seen to include canoeing, campfires, songs, rituals, tenting, games, communal living, etc. However, the potential of the Summer Camp as a venue for programs which provide goals other than babysitting and recreation is evident.

From Description to Prescription

The model which emerges from the description of the National Leadership Conferences is quite robust. It has become a prescription for other residential camp programs. For example an orientation camp for university freshmen.

This five-day program operates in a YMCA camp and its purpose has been to orient freshmen students to university life, set expectations and provide a setting for interaction between peers who will spend the next four years together. The use of the N.L.C. model and the inclusion of such activities as the basic seminars, pursuit of excellence sessions and a speaker series, has created a new dimension to this orientation program. The students return to

he university ready to serve and committed to becoming active vigilant students. Provided that there is ample follow-up at the university, the Samaritan Ethic remains and becomes consolidated.

It would be simple to adapt the model to any Summer Camp in North America. However, this model is not the panacea for all progressive camping programs. The premise is that Summer Camp programs should re-evaluate their goals and make a deliberate attempt to include some educational or social goals. With this, a careful selection of staff and an understanding of the Summer Camp as an agent of change, it would not be difficult to revive the Summer Camping movement in North America.

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